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SOVIET TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN

It was recently reported to us that the Soviet Union withdrew (list forces) from Afghanistan on (date). However, among these forces were some regiments -- two motorized rifle regiments to be exact -- that had only recently arrived in Afghanistan, and appear to us to have been sent there for the sole purpose of being withdrawn. In fact, the continuing, steady Soviet buildup of its forces accelerated somewhat after Gorbachev's July 28 statement, in which he said that the Soviets intended to withdraw six regiments of Soviet troops - one tank regiment, two motorized rifle regiments, and three air defense regiments - from Afghanistan by the end of the year. The six regiment withdrawal appears to be an integral part of a continuing Soviet effort to reshape its army in Afghanistan into a more effective anti-guerilla force. The Soviets' sole remaining tank regiment has long been understrength and its tanks dispersed and largely employed in static defense roles where mortars and mines would be more appropriate. As to the withdrawal of Soviet air defense units, it must be kept in mind that the Soviets and Afghan Government have the only air forces in Afghanistan -- not the Mujahideen. So essentially, following this troop withdrawal, Soviet capability in Afghanistan remains unchanged from what it was before the Soviet July 28th withdrawal statement.

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